

Bullying, Victimization, Rejection Sensitivity, and Self-regulation in Positive Development of Adolescents

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ABSTRACT

OBJECTIVE: To explore the interaction of bullying and victimization, rejection sensitivity, and self-regulation on the positive development in adolescents.

METHODOLOGY: Cross-sectional research was conducted at the Department of Psychology, the University of Gujrat, from June to September 2019. In phase I, Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ), Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (RSQ), and Positive Youth Development Inventory (PYDI) were translated in Urdu with the permission of their authors by forward-backward translation method. The pretesting was conducted on 130 adolescents selected from random sampling techniques from the public and private colleges of Sara-i-Alamgir. The scales were found reliable with 0.71, 0.83, and 0.85 coefficients, respectively. In phase II, with a stratified random sampling technique, 608 students aged 16 to 19 years with Yamane Formula were selected; after informed consent, Urdu versions of SRQ, RSQ, PYDI, Adolescent Peer Relationship Instrument (APRI), and demographic sheet were given to patients. AMOS-21 version was used to analyze the interaction path among the study variables via a structural equation model.

RESULTS: Structure Equation Modeling on the data of 608 students confirmed the validity of the model as it was found significant with the p-value <0.001. The model fit indices (CMIN/DF=2.32, CFI=0.99, AGFI=0.97, GFI, 0.99, TLI=0.98, RMSEA= 0.04, & RMR =0.66) were obtained in acceptable range.

CONCLUSION: The buffering effect of self-regulation plays a significant role in the development of adolescents' personalities positively while safeguarding them against the impact of bullying, victimization, and rejection sensitivity.

KEYWORDS: Adolescent Health, Bullying, Personality Development.

This article may be cited as: Shafiq S, Batool S. Bullying, Victimization, Rejection Sensitivity, and Self-regulation in Positive Development of Adolescents. J Liaquat Uni Med Health Sci. 2022;21(01):55-9. doi: 10.22442/jlumhs.2022.00883

INTRODUCTION

The well-being of adolescents could be enhanced by providing them opportunities for growth and development in positive directions¹. This could serve as a vital agent in propagating substantial economic growth of the country in futuristic terms². Positive Youth Development (PYD) is the latest emerged term that was eminently linked with socio-economic indicators on empirical grounds³. PYD defined as one's capacity to excel in a social, academic, and vocational competitive environment; efficaciously exhibit confidence, show connections with others, have morally integrated and robust character, and a caring and compassionate attitude while interacting with others. Therefore, contributing to the general well-being of the community⁴.

The self-regulation strategies of the individuals⁵ have significantly influenced positive youth development. Self-regulation has defined as the ability to execute biological and behavioral reactions within one's capacities of self⁶. Self-regulation has been found to affect the academic performance of adolescents⁷. It is observed that rejection sensitivity is monitored by self-regulation⁸.

There is a dire need to explore the interaction of

targeted fights and the impact of such conflicts on overall well-being and positive development of the personality in 16 to 19 years of developmental stage in Pakistan. A nation can only acquire good economic growth according to international standards if its youth is fit physically and mentally. No research has been found to explore the hypothetical model developed to investigate the interaction of bullying, victimization, rejection sensitivity, self-regulation, and positive development. It is empirically supported that a nation cannot prosper economically unless and until it has healthy adolescents capable of contributing to society. The literature indicates several factors such as bullying, victimization, and rejection sensitivity that can damage this positive development. However, proper self-regulatory mechanisms can change the pathway of positive growth in adolescents. Based on the literature review, the present study hypothesizes a significant predictor of positive development in adolescents when bullying, victimization, and rejection sensitivity interact through self-regulation strategies.

METHODOLOGY

This Cross-sectional research was conducted at the Department of Psychology, the University of Gujrat

from June - to September 2019 after approval from the advanced studies and research board (ASRB). The methodology is comprised of two phases.

Phase I: Pilot Study

Sample for the Pilot Testing

One hundred thirty students (with 50% distribution of girls and boys) were selected through simple random technique, taken from Government Commerce College for Girls, Gujrat, and Government Commerce College for Boys; Gujrat was given these Urdu versions. There were 49.2% 1st-year students and 50.8% were 2nd-year students with an age range between 16 to 19 years. 52.3% of students studied science, and 47.7% studied arts.

Instruments

Adolescent Peer Relations Instrument-Bully/Target (APRI-BT): APRI-BT is a 6-point Likert type scale (having a range between "never" =1 to "every day" =6) with 36 items and has two broad categories of bullying and victimization, each comprised of verbal, physical, and social subscales with overall 0.87 reliability coefficient⁹. Out of 36 things, 18 measured bullying with scores ranging between 18 to 108; higher scores indicate increased bullying experience. Similarly, another set of 18 items measured being targeted or victimized with scores ranging between 18 to 108; a higher score told the more significant experience of being victimized.

Rejection Sensitivity Questionnaire (RSQ): RSQ is a 6-point Likert-type scale (with a range between "not at all anxious/expectation very unlikely" =1 to "very anxious/ expectation very likely" =6) with 18 items and a 0.84 reliability coefficient¹⁰. The RSQ has twenty hypothetical situations and a required rating regarding rejection experienced by others. There are two options available for a rating of each case that, in turn, measured the intensity of anxiety and passion of concern for the consequences. To obtain the composite score for the rejection sensitivity, the formula comprised of the score for the degree of stress is multiplied by the reverse score for expectations of rejection [7 - the expectation of acceptance] and ranged between 1 to 36, a higher score indicating high sensitivity to rejection. The pilot study results showed that the Urdu version has an acceptable reliability coefficient such as $\alpha = .71$ for the Self-regulation questionnaire $\alpha = .83$ for the rejection sensitivity questionnaire.

One item was rejected from RSQ, "After graduation, you can't find a job and ask your parents if you can live at home for a while". In Pakistan, children can stay with their parents even after their stable jobs and marriages, making it irrelevant for adolescents of Pakistan.

Self-Regulation Questionnaire (SRQ): SRQ is a 5-point Likert-type scale (with response categories ranging between "not very like me" =1 to "very like me" =5), having twenty-two items and four subscales,

namely, Plan (5 items), Monitor (6 items), Control (6 items) and Reflect (5 items), with 0.89 reliability coefficient¹¹. SRQ was used to measure the self-regulation of emotions and behavior in adolescents with composite scores ranging between 22 to 110. A higher score indicates a higher level of self-regulatory strategies in the individuals. The results showed that the Urdu version was comprehensible and adequate reliability coefficient $\alpha = .71$ for the Self-regulation questionnaire in the pilot study.

Positive Youth Development Inventory (PYDI): PYDI is a 4-point Likert-type scale (with response categories ranging between "strongly disagree" =1 to "strongly agree" =4) with 55 items, with the reliability of ($r = .92$) reliability and six domains namely; Competence, Character, Connection, Caring, Confidence, and Contribution¹². PYDI measured the positive qualities withheld by the youth to participate actively in all spheres of life. The composite score ranged between 1 to 220, with individuals showing high scores indicating better development. The results showed that the Urdu version of the PYDI Reliability Coefficient was $\alpha = .85$ in the pilot study.

Translation and Reliability Analysis: All scales were translated in Urdu with permission from the authors by three psychology graduates (Ph.D.) using the forward-backward method¹³. A committee of three graduate candidates in psychology (two MPhils degrees and a Ph.D.) selected the best Urdu version of SRQ, RSQ, and PYDI. Urdu translations were back-translated in English by three bilingual specialists from the English department at the university and three other experts (MPhils) who assessed the suitability and sentence structure of the translated scales in Urdu scales. Content adequacy of the Urdu version for selected scales was improved by removing unnecessary words and adding understandable terms according to the cultural context of Pakistan.

Phase II: Main Study

Sample

A stratified random sampling technique with two strata was established, one from Government and the other from private colleges in Sara-i-Alamgir. Two randomly selected colleges from each stratum. A proportionate random sample from each stratum yielded 608 from 1st and 2nd-year students, calculated by using Yamane formula¹⁴.

Procedure

Advanced Studies and Research Board, University of Gujrat approved the present cross-sectional study design to be conducted at the Department of Psychology on the sample of college students (June-September 2019) studying in private and public institutes of Sara -i-Alamgir, permission from Principals of the colleges was taken, followed by the consent of class teachers to collect the data from the students. Written informed consent was taken from all students. They were briefly told about the study's

nature, followed by request to complete demographic information and the SRQ, APRI, RSQ, and PYDI scales presented in a packet form. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained about personal information and the data completed by the students by coding the data. Structure equation model (AMOS 21)¹⁵ was used to analyze the interactions among bullying and victimization, rejection sensitivity, self-regulation, and positive development and was confirmed by confirmatory factor analysis.

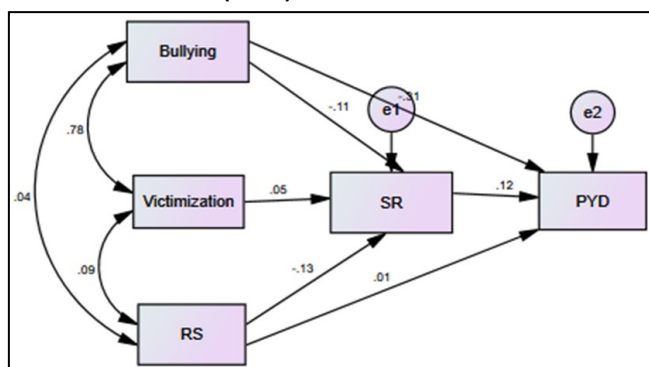
RESULTS

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) has yielded a model fit summary with a significant CMIN/DF value of 2.32 in the acceptable range, showing the structural relationship among bullying, victimization, rejection sensitivity, self-regulation with positive youth development. The correlation coefficient between bullying and victimization is high positive with $r=0.78$. However, negligible correlation coefficients are observed for bullying and victimization simultaneously with rejection sensitivity with values 0.04 and 0.09, respectively, in the present sample. The values of model fit indices such as GFI, AGFI, CFI, TLI, RMSEA, and RMR (Table I) are in acceptable ranges. Figure I of the structural equation model confirms the hypothetical model of the study derived from a review of various researches^{5,8}

TABLE I: MODEL FIT SUMMARY FOR VARIABLES OF THE STUDY (n=608)

| CMIN/DF | GFI | AGFI | CFI | TLI | RMSEA | RMR |
|---------|-----|------|-----|-----|-------|-----|
| 2.32 | .99 | .97 | .99 | .98 | .04 | .66 |

FIGURE I: STRUCTURE EQUATION MODEL FOR INTERACTION OF BULLYING, VICTIMIZATION, REJECTION SENSITIVITY (RS), SELF-REGULATION (SR) WITH POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT (PYD) IN ADOLESCENTS



DISCUSSION

Researchers have indicated detrimental influences of sensitivity issues on the well-being and interpersonal relations of adolescents^{16,17}. Within the context of interpersonal relationships, the phenomenon of

bullying and victimization has been explored in adolescents as it is a critical developmental stage of arousal and aggression¹⁸. A cluster of defining behaviors in bullying included the reoccurrence of plans to harm in an imbalanced power interaction where one is perceived as strong and another as weak¹⁹. And victimization is weak one who suffered the act of bullying by perpetrators²⁰. Experimental analyses revealed a significant reciprocal association between bullies and bullied victims with poorer self-regulation strategies than the control group of non-bullies or non-victims²¹.

So far, correlations are concerned among bullying, victimization, and rejection sensitivity in the structural equation model; previous research indicated a strong positive association between bullying and victimization²², supporting the finding of an association between bullying and victimization found in the present sample. However, in current research, bullying is not related to the sensitivity for rejection in adolescents. Previous research showed bullying has a significant relation with rejection sensitivity in the context of racio-ethnic individuals suffering at the hands of the power ideologies of the majority²³. Since a representative sample faces no prejudice issues based on ethnicity, the correlation between rejection sensitivity and bullying is negligible. Another study posited a weak association between victimization with anger-oriented rejection sensitivity rather than anxiety-oriented rejection sensitivity²⁴. Hence, anxious sensitivity to rejection is not related to the victimization experiences of the adolescents in the present study.

The present study's hypothesis has been confirmed based on the results of the study (Table I). It stated an association of fights and targeted discrimination with rejection sensitivity. These factors are buffered by self-regulatory mechanisms to significantly affect the mode of positive development in adolescents (Figure I). The findings of the previous research further strengthen this model. It has been found that the stressful situation prevalent due to bullying can be managed well by incorporating coping mechanisms and self-regulatory strategies^{25,26}. Similar results to adolescents have also been acquired in the sample of adults²⁷. In other studies, bullying, victimization, and rejection sensitivity have been linked and have shunned the well-being of people^{23,24}. A model of PYD can be incorporated in youth development and training programs²⁸ along with the intervention of promoting the development of self-regulation skills in them²⁹.

CONCLUSION

Conclusively, to enhance the positive development of personality in youth, the structural equation model

suggested training the adolescents with appropriate self-regulatory strategies to minimize the impact of sensitivity to rejection.

Ethical permission: University of Gujrat, Advanced studies / Research Board letter No. UOG/ASRB/ Psychology / 02/15177, dated 19-04-2019.

Conflict of Interest: There is no conflict of interest among the authors.

Financial Disclosure / Grant Approval: There was no funding agency.

Data Sharing Statement: The data supporting this study's findings are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Shafiq S: Concept & idea, analysis, data collection, drafting

Batool S: Data collection, manuscript writing

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